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SUBJECT: WOMEN IN THE MILITARY TCT TO LESOTHO

REF: MASERU 107

Summary: As part of the endeavor to foster military-to-military cooperation between the U.S. and Lesotho armed forces, a Travel Contact Team (TCT) undertook a visit to Lesotho from November 02 to 05, 2008. The TCT was composed of Colonel Martha McSally, Director of Current Operations at USAFRICOM in Stuttgart, Germany, and Major David Panzera, Bilateral Affairs Officer, Office of Security Cooperation at the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa. The purpose of the visit was to conduct a two day workshop aimed at improving the professional standing of women in the Lesotho Defense Force (LDF) and establish a baseline from which policy, regulations and directives can be formulated and developed to make improvements in the following area: sexual harassment, sexual assault, abuse of power, professional relationships and dress and appearance. End Summary.

¶2. Colonel McSally and Major Panzera's mission began with an in-brief with the Ambassador on November 03rd, 2008. The current situation in the Lesotho army concerning lack of policies and other directives in dealing with women in uniform was discussed. (Note: Colonel McSally is the first female combat pilot in the U.S. military. End note). Following the meeting, they travelled to Makoanyane Military Barracks accompanied by PDEP Officer where opening ceremony was officiated by Brigadier Thoriso Mareka, Assistant Chief of Staff for Finance and Administration.

¶3. After the opening ceremony, Colonel McSally gave her first briefing to ranking officers from Major to Colonel at the Makoanyane Military Hospital Seminar Room. There were only three female officers but there were several decision making Lieutenant Colonels and full colonels. Notably, Colonel Malefetsane Maboloka, Director of Logistics, Colonel Mohlahatsa, Deputy Air Wing Commander and Colonel Koenane, Director of Medical Services. The briefing which took approximately six hours was received very well. The discussion focused on lack of written policies and guidance on sexual harassment, sexual assault, training, pregnancy and most importantly, professionalism.

On November 04 2008, the second day of the visit, began with a quick tour of the Mejametalana Air Wing base where Colonel McSally, Major Panzera and PDEP Officer were shown the LDF aircraft. Following the tour, they were taken to an Australian made GA-8 Air Van where they were introduced to Lieutenant Malefane, the first LDF female pilot. LT Malefane took them on a forty-five (45) minute flight over the countryside. After the flight, they returned to Makoanyane Barracks to begin briefings with a mixed group of male and female troops. The briefings were far better than expected and the troops were fully engaged on the issues discussed. Day two concluded with a courtesy call on the Chief of Staff for Operations, Major General Phatoli Lekanyane. MG Lekanyane thanked Colonel McSally for coming to Lesotho to discuss the issue of Women in the Military which had his and the LDF Commander's backing. Later that evening Colonel McSally and Major Panzera attended an Election Night reception

at the Residence of the Ambassador which was attended by Lesotho dignitaries which include, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Cabinet Members, the Diplomatic Corps, judges, university students, mass media, captains of industry, heads of the security establishment, civil society members and senior government officials.

¶4. Comment: This visit was of paramount importance as some of the discussion revealed long standing myths holding up many from understanding the importance of how issues relating to women in uniform should be addressed. The two day workshop was professionally handled and the leadership present realized the seriousness of the issues and the desperate need for urgent action on their part to get things on paper. This was also demonstrated by MG Lekanyane by requesting Colonel McSally to send more information on these issues so that they can have a better starting point for policy formulation.

¶5. While there is much to be done, this was a critical first step that deserves much follow-on help by the U.S. military. With more assistance, this will pave the way for the LDF to become an improved and more professional force. This kind of break-through seminar is just what they needed, and need more of.

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